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ABSTRACT

Official reports and correspondence of the American Civil War were printed by the United States Government Printing Office as the "Official Records, Army" (O.R.) in 129 volumes and the "Official Records, Navy" (N.O.R.) in 31 volumes. This corrected and expanded edition of the guide provides a brief historical sketch of the O.R. and N.O.R. and states the types of materials that were included and excluded. The editing procedures, organization of the material, distribution system, accompanying publications (atlas, maps, index), gaps in coverage, accuracy of the original documents, and other insights into the use of the O.R. and N.O.R. as research resources are discussed. Appendix A indexes diagrams, maps, pictures, and sketches in the O.R. and N.O.R. Appendix B is a bibliography of books and articles which either were not cited in the first edition of this guide or have been printed since its publication. (JAB)

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USMA Library Bulletin No. 11A

The Official Records of the American Civil War: A Researcher's Guide

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

BY

ALAN CONRAD AIMONE
Special Collections Division
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Foreword by

Egon Weiss, Librarian
United States Military Academy

1977

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WEST POINT, NEW YORK 10996

3 May 1972

FOREWORD

The issuance of the *Researcher's Guide to the Official Records of the Civil War* augurs well to the student of Military History.

Whoever has attempted to use successfully the *War of the Rebellion* set can attest to the frustration, despair, and anguish involved in getting at the information expeditiously. Judicious use of the *Official Records* is further complicated by the relative ignorance of the scope and depth of each work.

What about arrangements and the idiosyncrasies of the editors who omitted certain important materials? What about the cartography? How comprehensive are the maps? What about different editions? What about the use of indexes? What are other important documentary materials of relevance?

These and other bibliographic questions are plausibly resolved by Alan Aimone's straightforward treatment which furnishes invaluable insights into the genesis and scope of these paramount historical sources.

It is appropriate, therefore, that this Guide be published as a Library Bulletin in that the USMA Library's holdings of American "Militaria" is unique and directly related to the Military Academy's interest and proficiency in the History of the Military Art as exemplified by the cadet curriculum and the teaching and research activities of its faculty.

It is hoped, therefore, that this much needed new reference tool will assist cadets at the Military Academy as well as the student of American Military History in and out of school.

EGON WEISS
Librarian, USMA

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Introduction to the 2nd Edition

The American Civil War is the most written about war in United States history. Confederate and Union official reports, and the correspondence of officers and civilian administrators were printed by the United States Government Printing Office as the 129 book *Official Records, Army* and the 31 book *Official Records, Navy*. In addition, the Government Printing Office published, in eight volumes, the U. S. Congress' *Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War*. These three sources have been used extensively by researchers into traps if they do not use the material critically.

The *Official Records, Army (O. R.)* and the *Official Records, Navy (O. R. N. or N. O. R.)* are not infallible. The firsthand reports written by ships' captains, regimental colonels, and commanders of operations reflect their stresses, moods and knowledge of the situation. Few reports actually state the commander lost the battle or his men behaved badly. "Back-biting"and "apple-polishing" can be detected. Many reports were written either too soon after the battle for a clear perspective or so long afterwards to be merely a judiciously phrased memoir. Although in many cases an officer's report was really written to defend his own actions, usually officers did report events truthfully, as they saw them.

Another shortcoming in these reports is the inclusion of some falsified documents. This is particularly true of Confederate material which should be evaluated carefully before it is used by researchers. The researcher should judge the reliability of the writer and whether the data is consistent with other information before basing conclusions on these documents. Recently Confederate Lieutenant Thomas Bennett Mackall's original diary was scrutinized and compared to the published version. It was discovered by Professor Richard M. McMurray of Valdosta State College, Georgia, that Mackall's diary was rewritten before it was turned over to the editors of the *O. R.* Entries were deleted, added and changed to enhance General Joseph E. Johnston's reputation while downgrading General John Bell Hood's leadership capabilities.

The *Guide Index to the O. R.*, published by the National Archives will be a time saver to researchers using the *O. R.* All references printed in the *O. R.* and *O. R. Atlas* pertaining to a particular battle or campaign are listed. The projected five volume *Guide Index to the O. R.* will be published by 1979.

This second edition of the *Official Records of the American Civil War: A Researchers Guide* has been corrected and expanded. The text has been corrected where necessary but otherwise not changed. In addition to this introduction, a new forward, and

an "Appendix B additional Bibliography" have been added. The new appendix lists reprints and other literature not cited in the first edition or publications that have been printed since the first edition of this guide.

The Official Records of the American Civil War:

A Researcher's Guide

Historical Background

Heroics, mistakes, foibles, and straight-forward accounts are recorded in the official reports of the Civil War commonly referred to as the *Naval Official Records* and the *Official Records*.[1] As the most quoted source for continuous monographic and periodic historical works on the Civil War, scholarly and otherwise, the *O. R.* have been a landmark of achievement in historical publishing. Historian Allan Nevins has stated that the *O. R.* are "one of the most impressive historical publications to be credited to any government in the world."[2] A contemporary review by John Puritay summed up the Army compilation by stating that they are as nearly a complete and full record of the war as it is possible to produce. There are thousands of books written whose facts are based partly or wholly on those in the *O. R.*[3] Information of every description abounds in the two government serial sets but it goes untapped because many researchers are overwhelmed by the 128 books of the Army compilation and the 30 books of the Navy compilation. Add an atlas containing over 1,000 maps, and almost anyone wonders where to begin researching. Consequently, those indispensable reference works have been used aimlessly at times.[4]

What prompted the undertaking of these colossal projects? The *O. R.'s* history began on January 20, 1864, when Massachusetts Senator Henry Wilson introduced in the Congress a joint resolution calling for the collection and publication of military reports and correspondence. President Abraham Lincoln signed the resolution on May 19, 1864. Documents were collected for the *O. R.* from December 1, 1860 to the termination of Civil War related events in Texas on August 20, 1866. The United States government was continually influenced during the compiling years by the veterans, who were politically ambitious and who possessed notable war records, the tastes and desires of the reading public, and the participants' desire to perpetuate the record of the Union and Confederate armies. The great amount of popular writing on the war before 1880 helped to inspire Congress to authorize the gathering of source documents of both sides.[6] The writing of military history in the United States, had up to this time, been of concern only to scholars, academicians, and devotees of the subject. "The chief idea was to present to the reader a connected account of any military event both from Union and Confederate records."[7] Quite likely this idealistic desire to keep the facts accurate for historical reference and accessible to the American public in convenient and permanent form was another motivation. A preliminary printing of 47 volumes was begun in 1864 by the Adjutant General's Office in simple chronological form and by type of material such as telegrams, letters, *etc.* Thirty volumes were printed before the publication was halted because it was too cumbersome to use; as many as six volumes would include material

pertaining to one battle. Papers were organized only by day and not by event.[8] The War Department Office took over from the Adjutant General's Office in 1876. The War Department Office published Volume 1 in July, 1881 and continued regular publishing of the 128 books until the index volume was published in 1901.

Meanwhile, the G.A.R. (Grand Army of the Republic) Confederate Veteran, Southern Historical Society Papers, Loyal Legion, and other strong political and patriotic organizations lobbied Congress for an official war record.[9] Many people thus appreciated the necessity of permanent records. Government documents would be a "guarantee of genuineness." There was an early movement by politically ambitious veterans to re-edit or rewrite reports and correspondence and even add what amounted to reminiscences. Fortunately, editor Robert N. Scott, the man most responsible for systematizing the practices that twenty-two later editors of the *O. R.* and the editors of the *N. O. R.* eventually followed, was able to convince Congress of the unreliability of human recollections and the danger of allowing changes.[10] Congress therefore directed that the publication should consist of nothing but contemporary material.[11] Lieutenant Colonel Scott did not see the work completed, nor did many of the veterans of the war, but so great was his influence that the momentum of his program carried the *O. R.* virtually unaltered to its completion 15 years after his death.

Content Inclusion and Exclusion

Battles and Leaders was the eventual outlet for officers writing their recollections of their war experiences. The Century magazine editors sponsored the four volume series but often had to persuade contributors to revise for historical accuracy and to keep out of politics. In at least one instance, editor Robert Underwood Johnson was challenged to a duel.[12] Most of the articles were written twenty to thirty years after the war. The various state commanderies of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States published volumes containing personal reminiscences of life in camp, battle, and prison. These accounts vary widely in accuracy and quality but contain good pieces of Civil War history. The Military Historical Society of Massachusetts published ten volumes of particularly critical articles of Civil War operations. Confederate personal accounts are contained in the Confederate Veteran and in the Papers of the Southern Historical Society. Unfortunately many writers of the Civil War period accept both later accounts and eye witness accounts written near the time as equally valid.[13] Army officers who knew about photographs of the war urged the government to publish a select 2,000 views in a supplementary volume to the *O. R.* but because of the fragile glass plates and the higher cost, it was decided at an early point not to include pictures.[14] The Adjutant General's Office was organizing a compilation of the "Roster of Officers and Enlisted Men in the Union and Confederate Armies" for publication until World War I brought a curtailment of the project for new tasks.[16] Further steps, including standardized editing were taken to make the Army compilation as accurate as possible.

THE

WAR OF THE REBELLION:

A COMPILATION OF THE

OFFICIAL RECORDS

OF THE

UNION AND CONFEDERATE ARMIES.

PREPARED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR, BY BVT. LIEUT COL. ROBERT N. SCOTT, THIRD U. S. ARTILLERY,

AND

PUBLISHED PURSUANT TO ACT OF CONGRESS APPROVED JUNE 16, 1880.

SERIES I—VOLUME I.

WASHINGTON:
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE.
1880.

The War of the Rebellion..., Title page of the series most responsible for factual writing on Civil War history.

REPORTS

OF

MILITARY OPERATIONS

DURING

THE REBELLION,

1860—1865;

INCLUDING REPORTS OF

THE ACTION OF SOUTHERN STATE AUTHORITIES

IN

SEIZING U. S. FORTS, ARSENALS, ETC.

ARRANGED IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER, IN ACCORDANCE WITH AN ACT OF CONGRESS APPROVED JUNE 23, 1874, UNDER THE D ..STION OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL OF THE ARMY, BY BVT. C. B. DAVIS.

VOLUME I.

LIBRARY.
U.S.M.A.

WASHINGTON:
ADJUTANT GENERAL'S PRINTING OFFICE.
1874.

Reports of Military Operations During the Rebellion..., Title page of the series of preliminary printings through which the Adjutant General's Office first attempted to put Civil War records together.

The American Civil War was the first war to use paper on a massive modern scale. The magnitude of the task of compiling the *N. O. R.* and the *O. R.* can be appreciated by the fact that the myriad of manuscripts was measured by the ton, roomful, and even building. The Federal telegram collection alone totaled over two million items. A three story building contained unorganized barrels, crates, and crammed boxes of Confederate records of discontinued commands. Work on the project was laboriously slow. Between 1885 and 1897 the *O. R.* editorial staff averaged six officers and sixty-nine clerks. All reports, telegrams, letters, memos, and the like were copied and checked for duplication, accuracy, and authenticity. Material was arranged for easy reference and foot-notes were added for clarification.[17] A blue stamp of the War Records Office was placed on documents surveyed or extracted. The office of the Chief of Naval War Records stamped "C.N.W.R." in red ink on naval documents copied for the *N. O. R.* Those documents not copied were marked with a zero. Correspondence was solicited in an attempt to piece together missing links.[18] Ninety boxes of Confederate records were sent back to Washington. The United States government was interested in locating any evidence of Confederate war crimes.

Confederate Material

Scholarly General Henry W. Halleck had ordered Confederate papers to be collected and sorted two weeks after the fall of Richmond. "The best authoritative records show that when the Union Army entered Richmond practically all of the records of the Confederate War, Treasury and Post Office Departments fell into its hands."[19] The bulk of Confederate parts of the *O. R.* were obtained from the Richmond salvaged documents. Although most Confederate documents were captured, others became available through the Southern Historical Society, individual donation, and purchase. Over 100,000 Confederate documents were purchased for historical reasons to prevent fraudulent claims. Confederate Generals Hood, Bragg and Polk's family sold over 10,000 documents apiece for a dollar each. Between 1861 and 1864 the Congress of the Confederate States of America, in Richmond, published twenty-four various official reports which were used in compiling the *O. R.*[20] The delay and the difficulty in gathering even more Confederate papers caused some serious publishing information gaps in the *O. R.*

Despite the loss of Confederate records due to chaotic conditions at the end of the war, and problems created by incomplete reports, concealment of documents by various Confederate officials pilfering by relic hunters, and losses in the Richmond fire of April, 1865, editors of the *N. O. R.* and the *O. R.* took steps to assure impartial treatment for the Confederacy.[21] The distrust held by the South for the procurement of war records was abated when it became known that Jefferson Davis had promptly complied with requests made for public documents in his possession. Both former Federal and Confederate officers were engaged in the editorial work. Editor Robert Scott believed that "absolute accuracy" would "only be secured by putting

OFFICIAL

REPORTS OF BATTLES,

EMBRACING

THE DEFENCE OF VICKSBURG,

BY MAJOR GENERAL EARL VAN DORN,

AND THE

ATTACK UPON BATON ROUGE,

BY MAJOR GENERAL BRECKINRIDGE,

TOGETHER WITH

LIBRARY.
U.S.M.A.

THE REPORTS OF THE BATTLES OF CORINTH AND HATCHIE BRIDGE; THE EXPEDITION TO HARTSVILLE, TENNESSEE; THE AFFAIR AT POCOTALIGO AND YEMASSEE; THE ACTION NEAR COFFEEVILLE, MISSISSIPPI; THE ACTION AND CASUALTIES OF THE BRIGADE OF COLONEL SIMONTON, AT FORT DONELSON.

RICHMOND, VA.:
SMITH, BAILEY & CO., PRINTERS.
1863.

Official Reports of Battles..., Title page of the Confederate War Department's counterpart to the *O.R.*

OFFICIAL RECORDS

OF THE

UNION AND CONFEDERATE NAVIES

IN THE

WAR OF THE REBELLION.

PUBLISHED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF

The Hon. H. A. HERBERT, Secretary of the Navy,

BY

LIEUT. COMMANDER RICHARD RUSH, U. S. NAVY,

Superintendent Naval War Records,

AND

MR. ROBERT H. WOODS.

By authority of an Act of Congress approved July 31, 1894.

SERIES I—VOLUME 4.

OPERATIONS IN THE GULF OF MEXICO

From November 15, 1860, to June 7, 1861.

OPERATIONS ON THE ATLANTIC COAST

From January 1 to May 13, 1861.

OPERATIONS ON THE POTOMAC AND RAPPAHANNOCK RIVERS

From January 5 to December 7, 1861.

RECEIVED
4 OFEB 97
U. S. Military Academy

WASHINGTON:

GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE.

1894.

Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies..., Title page of the U. S. Navy's counterpart to the *O.R., Army* series.

them *(O. R.)* in print under the immediate direction of those familiar with names of persons and places concerned, and with military terms, and who are jealously interested in this special work." Ex-Brigadier General Marcus Joseph Wright of the Confederate Army was selected to direct Confederate manuscript donations, loans, and purchases. Confederate officers hired by the War Records Office assured impartiality in the editing and publishing. Also a large percentage of the clerical staff was from the south. The War Department and numerous historical societies agreed upon free access to materials in each other's possession.[22] The Southern Historical Society was the leading Confederate record depository. Appeals in the Confederate Veteran magazine were also made for documents.

Editing

Choice of what was to be rejected proved to be generally excellent. Editor Robert Scott stated that "no report or document of any kind, which by any possibility can be useful for historical research, is omitted.[23] Participants in the war based their action upon information they had at the time, whether erroneous or factual. Many battle reports, therefore, include erroneous information regarding troop movements. Controversies would have developed to such a pitch, if the *N. O. R.* or the *O. R.* were editorialized, that the publications might not have been completed.[24] Errors of information were thus left untouched. Historical material, therefore, dictated what was finally included in the *O. R.* and the *N. O. R.* The publications helped settle long disputes over the disparity between Union and Confederate numbers and losses in battles. The routine letters of bureaus and departments, such as material concerning applications for appointments, arms, contracts, discharges, special exchanges, muster rolls, charges of disloyalty, claims of all descriptions, including personal services, offers for contracts or of inventions, plus unsolicited advice or suggestions from individuals were excluded. General Orders and Special Orders were published separately by the Adjutant General's Office. The Quartermaster Department also published its General Orders. The Surgeon General's Office published its own record and history, Medical and Surgical History of the War of the Rebellion.[25] Bad grammar, misspelling of geographical names, and names of important officers were corrected and a uniform style adopted.

Some material of value was not printed, however, due to its large volume or unavailability. Among those were some bureau reports, War and Navy Secretaries' reports, House and Senate reports, the papers of Robert E. Lee's Appomattox Headquarters, and some of Union General Joseph Hooker's papers. Gaps in Confederate material include the important battles of Seven Days, Jackson's Valley Campaign, Vicksburg, Gettysburg, and the winter of 1864-65. It appears from a survey made by the author, however, that many historians would still largely reject what the editors of the *N. O. R.* and the *O. R.* rejected.[26] However, some material was accidentally overlooked and deserved publication. In using the Navy compilation and the Army compilation,

then, the researcher must be conscious of its peculiarities.

Organization of the O. R. and N. O. R.

The 128 books of the *O. R.* are divided into series, volumes, parts, and chapters by campaign or engagement and also by theater. The *O. R.* has been divided into four series. Series I contains both Union and Confederate battle reports and correspondence and is by far the most lengthy. It follows a chronological and regional arrangement, with Union material preceding Confederate material. Correspondence, orders and reports relating to a battle or campign were arranged to give a complete history in the same volume. Volumes 51, 52 and 53 of Series I contain supplemental material received or discovered too late to be included in proper chronological and regional order. Series II consists of state, political and military prison reports, orders and returns. Series III contains Union information on mobilization, procurement of food, supplies, transportation and ammunition, including special state and federal reports. Series IV consists of simuliar Confederate reports. Each book ends with an index plus "additions and corrections" for the careful researcher to check.

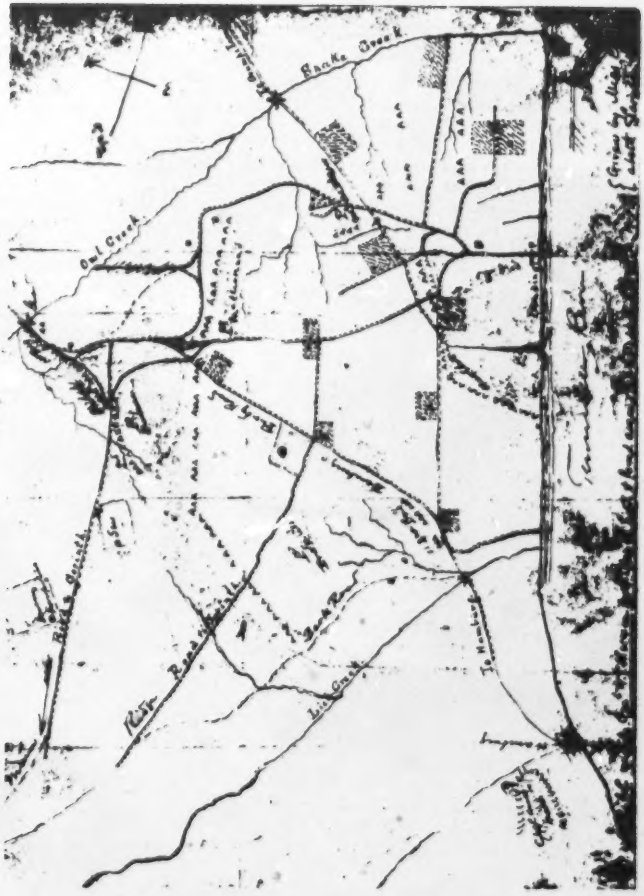
The 30 volumes of the *N. O. R.* are arranged differently. The *N. O. R.* editors, working from 1894 to 1927, learned much from the *O. R.* editors, who worked from 1881 to 1901. James R. Soley, U.S. Naval Academy history and law professor, particularly put "vigor and direction" into editing the Navy compilation.[27]

Naval officers generally had more time than Army officers to compile careful action reports. Volumes I - 27 of Series I contain information on naval operations; Volume I concerns cruisers on the high seas while the other volumes cover Union and Confederate naval vessels on the rivers and the Atlantic and the Gulf coasts.

Series II consists of three volumes: Volume I, statistical data on ships of both sides; Volume 2, official naval department correspondence; and Volume 3, muster rolls of the Confederate Navy and Marines. Both editorial groups realized Confederate material would be hard to find and therefore published as much as they could borrow or buy. Although the *N. O. R.* does not have a separate atlas, most volumes contain useful maps, tables, and pictures. The Pickett papers of Colonel John T. Pickett, chief of staff to General John C. Breckinridge, in Series II, Volume 3, have been described by the Civil War historian, E. B. Long, as "the best available printed sources of Confederate State Department correspondence--foreign relations, purchasing operations, *etc.*[28]

Arrangement and Distribution

Published sets of the *N. O. R.* and the *O. R.* have been arranged in three different ways. Both are normally referred to by series, volume, part, and page numbers. An alternate system is the use of



General William Tecumseh Sherman's sketch map of Shiloh used during the battle on April 6-7, 1862 and not in the *O. R. Atlas*.

Plate X, No. 10, in *O.R. Atlas*, W. T.
Sherman's after action Shiloh report map.

consecutive serial numbers, which are on the volume spines. The last method, rarely used, is by Government Printing Office numbers. Rebound sets of both the *N. O. R.* and the *O. R.* may be numbered differently on the spines.

Both the *N. O. R.* and the *O. R.* were distributed to libraries, organizations and individuals. Senators each could send up to 26 copies of the *N. O. R.* and the *O. R.* Some 8,300 copies were distributed among officers of the Army and contributors to the *O. R.* The remaining copies of both the *N. O. R.* and the *O. R.* were sold for cost of publication plus 10 per cent profit. The total cost has been figured at $3,158,515.67 which represents the estimated total of the salaries, pay and allowances, printing and binding, miscellaneous expenses.[29] Six later Congresses have provided further editions. Both the Navy compilation and the Army compilation have been increased from the original 10,000 planned.[30]

The *N. O. R.* and the *O. R.* can be found elsewhere. The Navy compilation is included in the House Documents beginning with the 53rd Congress, 3rd session. The complete Army compilation is also included in the House Miscellaneous Documents of the 52nd through 56th Congresses. The National Archives has made available the *N. O. R.* on microfilm M625 and the *O. R.* on M626. The National Historical Society, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, is reprinting a limited 1,000 copies of the *O. R.* The reprints are of higher quality paper, printing and binding. The roman volume numbering system on the spines will be replaced by all arabic numerals.[31]

O. R. Atlas

A separately published over-sized atlas was designed to accompany the *O. R.* Over ten thousand map sets of 37 parts, with five plates each, were issued in paper folders which made the maps easier to use. However, many purchasers had the option of obtaining the sets bound in either two or three parts. The *O. R. Atlas* contains 178 plates with three color battlefield maps, maps of cities and their plans of defense, military routes, and some photographic views plus uniforms and flags of both Confederate and Union armies.[32] Actual battle maps that could be located were included in the atlas. The *O. R. Atlas* has added significance because some of its maps were the first maps of many areas between Virginia and Texas. A West Point graduate compiled the *O. R. Atlas*. Charles Duvall Cowles eliminated duplicate maps, corrected errors and either reduced or enlarged maps. He also added colors to terrain and opposing Army units for easier reference.[33] However, Cowles unintentionally eliminated important data.

Cowles attempted to standardize map sizes and eliminate similar maps to make publishing the *O. R. Atlas* easier. Map scales became distorted when reduced or enlarged. When scale is not important, the *O. R. Atlas* is excellent for contemporary map information. If, however, scale is important, photocopies of the manuscript maps from

the Library of Congress, the National Archives and Records Service or the Department of the Interior should be obtained.[34] In some cases the Union maps were used instead of the Confederate map for the same battle. For example, the battle of Bristoe Station, Virginia, in the *O. R. Atlas* was prepared by Union General Gouverneur Kimble Warren and shows the Federal units in detail but the Confederate dispositions only in general. The Confederate map drawn by Major Jedediah Hotchkiss, Stonewall Jackson's "eyes", shows the opposite details. Apparently Cowles used the "better" of two maps rather than make a "complete new map" or include both maps.[35]

Confederate Maps

Confederate maps are scarce. Only 202 maps of the 1,006 contained in the *O. R. Atlas* are Confederate. However, Confederate maps appear for every major campaign, battle, or important skirmish. Few brigade or regimental commanders would have a map. Normally Confederate division commanders had maps.[36] Confederate guides and aggressive reconnaissance by the Southern cavalry often replaced the lacking Confederate maps. Most of the *O. R. Atlas* maps are after action maps prepared to accompany official reports. Many diagrams and sketches are to be found within the 128 books of the *O. R.* under the heading of the place and listed as sketches (see appendix). The post battle maps are therefore more accurate than the maps with which the battles were fought. A few were especially surveyed for historical purposes. Two special atlases were prepared for Antietam and Chickamauga showing contour features, troop positions and organization tables.[37] Some commanders had made their own maps. Union Generals Philip Henry Sheridan's Perryville map and William Tecumseh Sherman's Shiloh map were used during the battles.[38] Only a few actual battle maps appear in the *O. R. Atlas*. The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers published two separate military atlases in 1879 and 1883 showing western battles, fortifications, dispositions, routes, and campaigns. The West Point Atlas of the Civil War provides a researcher with troop position maps of major Civil War battles.[39]

O. R. Index

The *O. R. General Index* published in 1901 was revised in 1902 with additions and corrections incorporated. Over 180,000 entries are listed in the index. It is an abridgment of volume indexes only, not separate volume parts. One still has to check the book indexes for particular events, subjects and people. Separate addenda leaflets for each volume and the *O. R. Atlas* and the *O. R. General Index* were printed after 1902 to be inserted in the front of each volume. A total of 781,000 pamphlet editions of "additions and corrections" was distributed. Currently, few sets still possess these addenda pamphlets.[40] Proper names, such as people, places and military units, are usually handled adequately in the old double column *O. R. General Index*. A subject index arrangement is wanting, however, the *O. R. General Index* includes a useful outline history of the publication, a listing of volumes and parts, plus a synopsis of each volume.

Guide Index To The Official Records

Dallas Irvine's A Guide-Index to the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, 1861-1865, sponsored by the National Archives and Records Service as part of the contribution of that organization to the Civil War Centennial Commission, clarifies battles in campaigns, geographic locations (including river branches) and many secondary figures unidentified or confused in the *O. R. General Index*. It is not only a finding aid but a source guide as additional references are cited, including the *N. O. R.* Explanatory notes in citations are helpful in studying minor operations. Improved and new reference aids, as map and sketch indexes, cross-references (including catch-names), dated entries, key reports of leading military operations and a section of Series I book "peculiarities" will make Irvine's five volume work important to the users of the *O. R.*[41]

O. R. Gaps

There are some dangers in using the *N. O. R.* and the *O. R.*, they can be overestimated. Not all existing material connected with military operations are to be found in the *Official Records, Navies* and the *Official Records, Armies*. The United States Congress Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War issued various reports of military operations which the Committee examined and investigated. No documentary evidence is provided in the *O. R.* for almost a third of the operations listed. Neither the *O. R.* editors nor military historians have written anything about this deficiency.[42] Military bureaus of enrollments, conscriptions, ordnance, subsistence, have to be found in various libraries and archives. Particular unit history material, such as exact strength and morale of the command, are more often to be found in the individual papers of the participants in various libraries.

The *N. O. R.* often must be used in conjunction with other source material. Series I of the *N. O. R.*, being only a selection of available correspondence, does not contain all significant information. Civil War Chronology, 1861-1865, recently published in six parts by the U.S. Naval History Division serves as an additional source when using the *N. O. R.*[43] Detailed studies of Civil War Naval history require examination of original records available in the National Archives.

O. R. Accuracy

Care must be taken when using parts of the *O. R.* Many of the earlier volumes, containing correspondence, need considerable revision.[44] It is important to know the circumstances under which the report was produced. An estimate of the character and reliability of the information on which a report was based is required. The historian also needs to seek possible motives for concealment or modification of the truth by the framers of the original report. Commanding officers were naturally reluctant to admit any shortcomings either of their leadership or in the conduct of their men.

The battle of Pleasant Hill (second engagement) report sums up a Union brigade's casualties of eight men killed and seventy wounded. However, the report fails to note that the 34th Iowa bore the brunt of the attack with six killed and 58 wounded. Too often the *O. R.* will list brigade casualties only. Other discrepancies can be found by referring to the original battle dispatches (not in the *O. R.*). Also, explicative material has been left out, without which the existing published documents assume different shades of interpretation.[45] Social, administrative and economic researchers have found the *O. R.* helpful but still need to check the archives for correspondence of particular subordinate officials and various departments for "raw material".

Some officers and civil administrators colored their statements or were lax in writing reports to their superiors. Occasionally details were therefore forgotten or were misrepresented. Commonly, sketchy reports made during combat by small unit commanders were passed to regimental or division commanders who often corrected the data in light of, what seemed to them, more authentic information. The original sketchy information was often not verified in battle but supplemented by reports of scouts, reports of officers who had been part way to the front, somewhat confused reports from wounded officers and troops, and information from some neighboring units.[46] The time of reports is important. Robert E. Lee used the military arguments contained in his Maryland invasion report to substantiate his after-action report on the Army of Northern Virginia after Antietam.[47] Other officers were prejudiced toward some officers or sensitive to military slights, such as juniors in rank being given better opportunities. For example, Union General Joseph Hooker asked to be relieved from command when General Oliver Otis Howard, "Fighting Joe Hooker's" former subordinate, was placed in command of the Union Army of the Tennessee.A critical officer, such as "Stonewall" Jackson, would impress an unfamiliar reader with the number of poor officers he had. Few officers included their own poor decisions.[48]

A check must be made of the validity of officer reports in the *N. O. R.* and the *O. R.* by comparing them with known facts in archival sources, Moore's Rebellion Record, histories, and sometimes on the battle-field checking. Defeated officers often covered up their faults by claiming strategic withdrawals or shifting responsibility. It is often difficult to discern from official reports of a single action who actually won. Successful officers often claimed too much credit, such as Union General John Pope at Island No.10.[49] Confederate General Thomas J. Jackson often wrote his battle reports several months after the action. Because officers of both high and low rank had the habit of retaining papers, such as letters and order books, individual manuscript collections must be searched. An additional gap was created during the 1860's and 1870's when some government file records disappeared. Due to the lack of comparable Confederate reports of certain key battles, some Confederate officers were asked to write their reports fifteen years after the actual battles. Some

events were written by officers who had no direct part in them. The accuracy of these Confederate reports is sometimes questionable.[50]

The *O. R.* compilers used odd publications and documents plus the Rebellion Record for a battle list. Frank Moore's semi-official Rebellion Record material was taken from contemporary newspapers, and such errors as would be expected were copied into the *O. R.*[51] The *O. R.* editors also borrowed many combat entries on faith from parts VII and VIII of the Official Army Register of Volunteer...for the Civil War. The list was compiled from casualty notations on muster rolls and strength returns. The data was accepted. Unevaluated material, with errors, was thus incorporated in the Army compilation. Miscellaneous information, adjustments and guess work made up later officer's reports. Other reports were written too soon after a battle for clear perspective. The wrong date, place or type of occurrence therefore was copied. A supposed skirmish at Magruder's Ferry, Virginia, was really Magruder's Ferry, Maryland. Three skirmishes are listed as having occurred in Pennsylvania on July 5, 1863, after the battle of Gettysburg: one at Greencastle, another at Mercersburg, and the third at Cunningham's Crossroads. They are different names for the same action. Cunningham's Crossroads turns out to be located just south of the state line in Maryland.

Confederate officers often wrote their reports and used the name of the town nearest an action, like Manassas, while Union officers usually had field headquarters and used names of geographical features, like Bull Run. Spencer, West Virginia is listed as having a skirmish on June 16, 1862, but it is misdated by two years. Other examples of inaccuracies are numerous, especially regarding local operations.[52]

Can the *N. O. R.* and the *O. R.* be over-used? It appears so because of the uneven bibliographies in a few monographs. Occasionally writers use the Navy compilation and the Army compilation without balancing their material with other printed and manuscript sources. Writers need to separate fact and interpretation. Diaries or letters, written while the facts were fresh in mind and when hasty first impressions had been corrected in light of fuller information have proven the best recourse. In such narratives personal bias is more easily detected than in impersonally coached official reports; where use of several such narratives is possible, the personal element may be in great measure eliminated. Manuscript sources cannot supercede the document but can assist in warning that the official document is so corrupted or so remote from the actual occurrences it purports to describe that it should be altogether rejected.[53]

The United States War Department continued to receive private gifts of original documents after the last book was printed. Originally, there were plans to publish more documents in two additional volumes, but none have yet been issued, although enough significant manuscripts have been located to provide material for new source books. The Papers of the Southern Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia

published many Confederate papers not in the *O. R.* Douglas Southall Freeman's A Calendar of Confederate Papers lists other Confederate manuscripts important to Southern history that were not included in the *O. R.*[54] Other records are to be found in various sources for the diligent researcher.

Confederate correspondence has been difficult to secure not only because of military and political reasons but also because of the scarcity of paper used for gun-wadding and the fact that many documents were written on cheap brown sheets which deteriorate from time and exposure. Some official returns were made on wall paper torn from walls. Light-colored ink, difficult to read, was also used by Robert E. Lee, George Pickett and other Confederates.[55]

Recent historians and archivists have checked the *N. O. R.* and the *O. R.* for accuracy. Minor details often were not checked because of the size of the project. Many of the spelling errors occur in geographic and personal names, especially in the earlier volumes. Standardized geographic names have caused the following inaccuracies: Corrick's Ford became Carrick's Ford, Champion Hill became Champion's Hill, and Snyder's Bluff became Haynes Bluff. Often the original sources gave the correct spelling.[56]

Careful archival study has discovered many discrepancies in the *O. R.* small unit actions. Small unit actions account for less than half of the reports in the *O. R.* For example, the death of one man on September 16, 1861 at Magruder's Ferry, Maryland, from being run over by a team of horses, resulted in the accident being recorded on that date as a skirmish. The researcher, to be most accurate, should check in more than one source, for place names, dates and types of casualities. Original muster rolls and strength returns are the "raw material" for small action information.

But wartime circumstances make these rolls and returns not completely accurate, particularly regarding casualties. Casualties were recorded as a routine administrative task generally some time after the incident or action. Some officers did not record minor wounds. Published statistical sources compiled by Phister, Livermore and Fox are sources to be used by Civil War researchers. However, Charles Dornbush's Military Bibliography of the Civil War, Frederick Dyer's Compendium of the War of the Rebellion and E. B. Long's Civil War Day by Day can also be useful reference tools for small unit actions.[57]

An important value of the *N. O. R.* and the *O. R.* is that papers were published the way they were written and officially acted upon. The benefit of having both former Union and Confederate officers serving in editorial capacities contributed to the accuracy and impartiality of the records. Dated documents established facts and led students and historians to further investigate controversies and attempt to settle disputes.[58] Recognizing the limits of the *N. O. R.* and the *O. R.*, and the need for balancing their data with that from

other sources, they have great value. No one writing on a subject has exhausted either the *N. O. R.* or the *O. R.*[59] Time and usage have proven their worth as accepted military sources. The quantity and quality of Civil War books and articles furthered by the invaluable *N. O.R.* and the *O. R.* The later Civil War unit histories relied on the *O. R.* heavily.

Biographer Nathaniel Hughes states that "it would be virtually impossible to attempt a biography of a Civil War military figure without...using the *O. R.*".[60] Information on local events and minor figures as well as major events often can be found in the collected works of Abraham Lincoln, Jefferson Davis and U.S. Grant which supplements material in the *N. O. R.* and the *O. R.*[61] Biographical material such as vanities, personal ambitions, candor, modesty, and cordiality of subordinates of the writer can be derived by the unedited field dispatches. This is not true of today's military reports. Union General Ulysses Simpson Grant was a very concise writer. Union General George Brinton McClellan and Confederate General Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard wrote into their reports varied personal opinions.[62] Generally the correspondence parts of the *O. R.* and the *N. O. R.* are more valuable than report parts because correspondence was not written with an eye to posterity. Thus the relationship of the *N. O. R.* and the *O. R.* to historical writing today remains significant because the writing has been left largely as it was in the original style.

The voluminous *N. O. R.* and the *O. R.* will continue to be of great value both as a reference tool and as a primary Civil War source. The straight-forward historical reporting of the *N. O. R.* and the *O. R.* allows biographers, historians, political scientists and other literary writers to know what and how facts were written at the approximate time of their occurrence. The volume of organized printed sources in the *N. O. R.* and the *O. R.* helps any researcher. The time and expense these volumes have saved the government in answering queries are incalculable. The sources are available in the original thick volumes, the government congressional document series, or in the microfilm copies. The *O. R. Atlas* is a convenient compilation of the 1860 era maps of the United States that would be difficult to gather today. The new Irvine Guide Index will assist in the reference use of the *O. R.* Like any other source books, the Navy compilation and the Army compilation have their weak points, but the material gaps can usually be compensated for by secondary works, supplementary reference books, and manuscript collections. The turning point in the United States history is of continuing interest. The *N.O.R.* and the *O. R.* remain both primary source "gold mines" for historical books, talks and articles. Their durability as the dominant source of information of the American Civil War cannot be overestimated.

FOOTNOTES

1. U. S. War Dept., *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, ed. by Robert N. Scott et al., 70 vols. in 120 parts (Washington, 1881-1901). Hereafter cited as *O. R.* U. S. Navy Dept., *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, ed. by Richard Rush et al., 31 vols. (Washington, 1894-1927). Hereafter cited as *N. O. R.* Contemporary Northern histories often refer to the *Rebellion Records* and contemporary Southern histories sometimes use the term *War Records*.

2. Dallas D. Irvine, *Prospectus; Military Operations of the Civil War: A Guide-Index to the "Official Records, Armies, 1861-1865"* (Washington 1966) p. v.

3. John Purifay, *"The Memory Not Trustworthy," Confederate Veteran* (September, 1920), 327.

4. E. B. Long, *"The Official Records--Bulwark of Civil War Research", Civil War Book Club Review*, IV, No. 10 (July, 1952), 2.

5 James I. Robertson, *"War in Words", Civil War Times Illustrated*, XI, No. 1 (April, 1972), p. 48.

6. U. S. Senate, Ex. Doc., No. 6, 46th Cong., 3d sess., 1880, pp. 4-5.

7. New York Times, *"A Mammoth book: Official Records of the Civil War Compiled at Last in 128 volumes. Cost Nearly Three Millions of Dollars"* review of the *O. R. in New York Times Magazine Supplement*, (October 6, 1901) 8.

8. *Checklist of United States Public Documents, 1784-1909*, I (Washington, 1911), p. 1390. U. S. Adjutant-General's Office, *Reports of Military Operations During the Rebellion, 1860-1865; Including Reports of the Action of Southern State Authorities in Seizing U. S. Forts, Arsenals, etc.* 30 vols. (Washington, 1874-1880). Some maps, diagrams and folded tables were inserted.

9. Albert Bushnell Hart, *"The Historical Opportunity in America," American Historical Review, IV*, No. 1 (October, 1898), 8.

10. Scott had been an aide to "Old Brains", General Henry W. Halleck. He also qualified for the editorship of the *O. R.* by being a professor of military art and science, a member of the board of army regulations, an author of an analytical digest of U. S. military laws, and a military secretary to the Congressional committee engaged upon reorganization of the army. *Army and Navy Journal*, XXIV, (March 12, 1887), 661.

11. Irvine, *"Genesis of the Official Records," Mississippi Valley Historical Review* (September, 1937) 225, 227.

12. Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buel, ed., *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, I (New York, 1956), iii.

13. Douglas Southall Freeman, *"An Address: Douglas Southall Freeman,"* *Civil War History*, (March, 1955), 8. Military Historical Society of Massachusetts, Boston, 10 vols. (Boston, 1895-1918). Southern Historical Society, *Papers*, (Richmond, Va., 1876-1910). *Confederate Veteran*, (Nashville, Tenn., 1893-1932). Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States (various publications, 1883-1909).

14. Matthew B. Brady and Alexander Gardner, *Original Photographs Taken on the Battlefields During the Civil War of the United States* (Hartford, c 1907), p. 9. *Sec. of War Reports, 1895* I, p. 589. Other considered supplements to the *O. R.* were published separately. Marcus J. Wright privately published *Local Designations of Confederate Troops and Memorandum of Armies, Corps, and Geographical Commands in the Confederate Army During the Years 1861, 1862, 1863, 1864, and 1865 plus Memoranda of Organization of the Confederate Navy Department and Register of the Officers of the Navy, 1861-1864.* The Adjutant-General's Office published *Lists of Synonyms of Organizations in the Volunteer Service of the United States During 1861-1865*, comp. by John T. Fallon (Washington, 1885). The Quartermaster Department published *Commanders of Army Corps, Divisions and Brigades, U. S. Army, 1861-1865* (Philadelphia, 1888) and *Flags of the Army of the United States Carried During the War of the Rebellion, 1861-1865, to Designate the Headquarters of the Different Armies, Army Corps, Divisions, and Brigades* (Philadelphia, 1888). William Frayne Amann, *Personnel of the Civil War*, 2 vols, (New York, 1968), pp. v-viii.

15. Francis Trevelyan Miller and Robert S. Lanier, ed., *Photographic History of the Civil War*, 10 vols., (New York, 1911). *Confederate Veteran, "More About Printing"*, (April, 1903), 151.

16. *Sec. of War Reports, 1917*, I. P. 202. After the war the Adjutant-general compiled a list of Union officers, *Official Army Register of the Volunteer Force of the U. S. Army for the Years 1861-1865*, 8 vols. (Washington, 1865-1867).

17. *O. R. Atlas*, No. 261 of House Mis. Doc., v.40, 52d Cong., 1st sess. (Ser. No. 2990), p. 3.

18. Kenneth W. Munden and Henry Putney Beers, *Guide to Federal Archives Relating to the Civil War* (Washington, 1962), p. 449.

19. *N. O. R.*, Ser. II, v.3, p.15.

20. Marjorie Lyle Crandall, *Confederate Imprints, A Check List Based Principally on the Collection of the Boston Athenaeum*, I, (Boston, 1955) pp. 222-224, 228-231. Harwell, Richard Barksdale, *More Confederate Imprints*, I, (Richmond, Va., 1957), p. 69. U. S. Senate, Ex. Doc. No.6,

46th Cong., 3d sess., 1880, pp. 1-6.

21. John JOnes William, *Southern Historical Society Papers*, VI, No. 4-6 (Oct. - Dec., 1878), 191-192, 239-240, 291-292.

22. *Sec. of War Reports, 1878*, p. 18. Irvine, *"The Archive Office of the War Department-Depository of Captured Confederate Archives, 1865-1881"*, *Military Affairs*, X, (Spring, 1946), 107. Most of the Confederate papers piled in the streets and intentionally set afire on the evening of the Richmond evacuation were of secondary value - vouchers, unissued bonds, and unsigned notes. But valuable Confederate War Department, Surgeon General, Commissary General, Signal Office, and Army Intelligence Office records were rescued from the fire which swept through the city on the morning of the occupation. Many records, however, could not be removed quickly enough. Irvine, *"Fate of Confederate Archives"*, *American Historical Review XLIV* (July, 1939), 829.

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46. Theodore Calvin Pease,..."*A Caution Regarding Military Documents", American Historical Review, XXVI*, (October, 1920 - July, 1921), 282-283.

47. *O. R.* I, v.19, pt. 2, p. 590 and *O. R.* I, v. 19, pt.1, pp.144-153.

48. Robertson, *"Battle of the Books", Civil War Times Illustrated*, VIII, No. 10 (February, 1970), p.47.

49. Jacob Dolson Cox, *Literature of American History*, ed., by J.N. Larned (Boston, 1902), p.215.

50. J. B. F., *"Official Records of the War of the Rebellion", Journal of the Military Service Institution of the U. S.*, III, No. 10 (1882), 288.

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53. Pease, 284.

54. Freeman, *A Calendar of Confederate Papers* (New York, 1969) p. 7, 9. National Archives and Records Service, *Confederate States Army Casualties: Lists and Narrative Reports, 1861-1865*, David Gibson, comp. (Washington, 1971). Henry Putney Beers, *Guide to the Archives of the Government of the Confederate States of America*, (Washington, 1968), p.421.

55. Charles Hamilton, *Collecting Autographs and Manuscripts*, (Norman, Okla., 1969), p. 152.

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59. Long, Interview, Visiting history lecturer, University of Illinois Circle Campus, Chicago, Feb. 14, 1969.

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61. Roy P. Basler, ed., *Collected Works of Abraham LIncoln*, 8 vols. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1953-1955). John Y. Simon, ed., *Papers of Ulysses Simpson Grant*, 1- vols. (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967-). Haskell M. Monroe and James F. McIntosh, eds.,*Papers of Jefferson Davis* (Baton

Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971-).

62. Long, Interview, February 14, 1969.

Appendix A

Diagram, map, picture, and sketch index to the N.O.R. and the O.R. Unless noted all citations refer to series I of both sources. All citations refer to the *O.R.* unless *N.O.R.* is noted.

A.D. Vance, blockade runner. N.O.R., X, p. 453.

Alabama (northern Alabama and Georgia, Sept. 29 - Nov. 13, 1864) XXVIV, pt. 1, pp. 722, 824.

Alexandria, La. to Henderson's Hill, La. (Bayou Rapides Road) XXIV, pt. 2, p. 725.

Andersonville, Ga., prison. Ser. II, vol. VII, p. 590.

Annie, blockade runner, Oct. 31, 1864. N.O.R., XI, p.35.

Apalachicola River, Fla. XXVIII, pt. 2, p. 425.

Arkansas, Shelby's Raid (Ark. and Mo., Sept. 22 - Oct. 26, 1863) XXII, pt. 1, p. 679.

Arkansas Post, Ark., Jan. 4 - 17, 1863. XVII, pt. 1, pp. 711-715, 760-762.

Armstrong, blockade runner. N.O.R., Ser. II, vol. 2, p. 340.

Arnot Barracks, Elmira, N.Y. Ser. II, vol. IV, p. 71.

Atlanta, Ga., May - Sept. 8, 1864. XXXVIII, pt. 1, pp. 211, 426-427, 638-639, 756, 866, 880; pt. 4, p. 290; pt. 5, pp. 57-58, 536; July 22, 1864. XXVIII, pt. 3, pp. 479-482, 820.

Bahama, blockade runner. N.O.R., VII, p. 242.

Banshee, blockade runner. N.O.R., VIIII, p. 319; capture. N.O.R. VIIII, p. 323.

Batesville, Ark. to Elgin, Ark., Jan. 15-17, 1864. XXXIV, pt. 2, p. 107.

Bayou Fourche, Ark., Sept. 10, 1863. XXII, pt. 1, pp. 493, 515.

Bayou Rapides Road, Alexandria, La. to Henderson's Hill, La. XXXIV, pt. 2, p. 725.

Bayport, Fla. N.O.R., XVII, pp. 410, 541.

Belle Prairie, La., Red River, May 16, 1864. XXIV, pt. 1 pp. 234-235.

Benjamin, Judah P., Secretary of State, etc., C.S., N.O.R., Ser. II, vol.3, front.

Bentonville, N.C., March 19-21, 1965. XXXVII, pt.1, p. 1110; pt.2, p. 905.

Berry's Ferry, Shenandoah River, Va., April 15, 1862. XII, pt. 3, p. 102.

Beverly, W. Va., Jan. 11, 1865. XXXXVI, pt. 1, pt. 450.

Big Black River, Miss., bend at Coaker's Ferry. XXIV, pt. 3, p. 465;

Big Black River Bridge, Miss., May 17, 1863. XXIV, pt. 2, p. 72.

Blake's Farm, W. Va., Nov. 10-11, 1861. V, p. 274.

Boydton Plank Road, Va., Oct. 27-28, 1864. XXXII, pt.1, pp. 233, 435-436.

Brandy Station, Va., June 9, 1863. XXVII, pt. 2, p. 686.

Breckinridge, John C., Secretary of War, C.S., 1865. N.O.R., Ser.II, vol. 3, p. 510.

Bridgeport, Ala. from Cave Spring, Ala., Aug. 16 - Sept. 22, 1863. XXX, pt. 3, p. 340.

Bristoe, Va., Oct. 9 - 22, 1863. XXVIIII, pt. 1, pp. 323, 1018.

Bull Pasture Mountain, Va., May 8, 1862. XII, pt. 1, pp. 474-475.

Bull Run (First) Va., July 21, 1861. LI, pt. 1, p. 26.

Bull Run (Second) Va., Aug. 29-30, 1862. XII, pt. 2, supplement vol., folded map between pp. 1052-1053; Aug. 30, 1862. XII, pt. 3, pp. 959-960.

Burgess' Mill Va., Oct. 27-28, 1864. XXXXII, pt. 1, pp. 233, 435-436.

C.S.S. Alabama, N.O.R., I, p. 770; engagement with the U.S.S. Kearsarge, June 19, 1864. N.O.R., III, p. 81.

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